

Appleby Archaeology Group January Meeting 2004.

Appleby Archaeology Group held its AGM on the 13th of January. This meeting was followed by a Members' Evening when two of the group were the speakers.

Phyllis Rouston, using slides, described the results of a survey at Crake Trees. The ruined house is a Grade 2 listed building and a Scheduled Ancient Monument. It is located near Crosby Ravensworth facing north east overlooking the Lyvennet valley.

English Heritage surveyed the site three years ago to "assess the importance of the buildings and the hitherto unrecorded earthworks....". In March 2002 Appleby Archaeology were invited to join Crosby Ravensworth History Society in a guided walk of the site led by two members of the survey team. The documentary evidence and survey results have helped to build up a picture of the house and the use of the land over a period of seven hundred years.

The earliest remains, dating to the 14th century, are those of a medieval solar wing, (the part of the house where the family lived) with an attached chapel to the south. A ground floor timber hall and service block would have been joined to the north. A number of small enclosures and fields surrounded the house and nearby there was a fish pond with terraces to one end. The house was approached by track ways, still clearly visible, and visitors approaching along the main track, which descended the hillside, would have been impressed by the house and its setting.

In the late 16th century or early 17th century the house was largely rebuilt. The timber hall was replaced by a single storey stone hall and a new solar tower. The solar wing now became the service block. At this time the house was owned by the Lancaster family but in 1638 it passed, on marriage, to the Lowthers of Whitehaven and may then have been occupied by tenants. Evidence suggests that farming became more important and cultivation of the surrounding areas was brought closer to the house.

In the late 17th century a second storey was added to the hall. This can be seen in drawings of the 1860s and photographs taken in 1936. By the early 19th century the conversion of Crake Trees to a farmhouse was complete with the addition of a barn, changes to the fields and a move from arable to pastoral farming. The 1851 census records the last farmer to live at Crake Trees.

In 1871 the house was occupied by two families and it was abandoned by 1881. At the time of the guided walk the 18th century barn was being converted to a 21st century home so once again a family is living on the site of Crake Trees.

Martin Railton then spoke about a survey he had undertaken at Hartsop Hall lead mine, 1.5km south west of Hartsop in the Ullswater valley, where the mineral vein runs along an east facing slope. He began by reviewing the documentary evidence and then, using slides, described the findings of a survey he did in spring 2003.

The earliest recorded dates for lead mining at the Hall are from the late 17th century when the mine was owned by Sir John Lowther. At this time the miners would have worked at the surface, where the lead was visible, or dug shallow shafts. It is unclear how much mining activity there was in the 18th century. A survey of the Manor of Hartsop in 1764 records the location of the lead vein and one level. A nearby lead smelter is marked as the "Old Smelt Mill" suggesting it had gone out of use and an audit of tools and equipment, also dated 1764, indicates that mining was going on but on a small scale.

In 1830 the mine was reopened by two miners from Alston. Two levels were opened to access the lead vein but returns must have been poor as the mine closed after two years. Thirty years later a consortium of local miners took up a thirty year lease. They drove in new levels, built a mill and introduced water power to drive a wheel to power the crushing machinery. In 1868 nine miners were working at the mine but due to financial difficulties the mine was closed in 1871 and the buildings pulled down. Some of the stone and slate was reused to build a barn at the Hartsop Hall Farm and to extend Brothers Water Hotel.

The mine was again reopened in 1931 and a new mill was erected on the old site. Oil driven engines powered the rollers and crushers, and facilitated an increase in drilling power. It closed finally in 1942 due to wartime difficulties and when Lord Lonsdale died the land was donated to the National Trust.

The survey was restricted to surface remains associated with the mine and was done to help "inform the conservation of the mine and as an aid to its interpretation". Features of each period of mining were located over the 500m of the hillside surveyed. The earliest evidence was of

surface working directly over the lead vein including five possible shafts, one of which was later extended underground. Adit entrances, spoil heaps, remains of buildings, leats and tracks were all identified and could be linked to the documentary findings.

Mining at Hartsop hall was never a large scale operation but it appears to have provided a living for local families over four centuries. Erosion is now a serious threat to the mine remains and work to consolidate the mine has been recommended to the National Trust.

Both speakers took questions from the floor and were thanked for their contribution to the evening.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday February 10th and is titled Behind the Scenes at Penrith Museum. Please meet at Penrith Museum at 7.45pm.

Phyllis Rouston 21/1/04